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# THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST.

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No. 1.

## SIOUAN ONOMATOPESES.

BY JAMES OWEN DORSEY.

What is an onomatope? A few days ago, after the greater part of this paper had been prepared, the writer chanced to see a book by Messrs. Goddes-Liancourt and Pincott, entitled "The Laws of Language,"\* in which occurs the following definition: "An onomatope is a sound consciously uttered for a purpose." This book, of which I have read only a few pages, gives a list of writers who have defined an onomatope in various manners, beginning with the ancient Greeks and including those of our own time.

The writer prefers to give the definition of the Century Dictionary: "An onomatope is a word formed to resemble the sound made by the thing signified." But he ventures to amend this definition by inserting the clause, "or root," between "word" and "formed," so as to make the definition read: "An onomatope is a word or root formed to resemble the sound made by the thing signified."

Scholars have begun to realize that the languages of the Old World are not the only ones which deserve our attention. Correlative pronouns in the Greek are but few compared with those found in the languages of the Siouan and Athapascan families. In one of the Athapascan languages of Oregon, that of the Tutu tunne, the writer found many verbs, which, after a careful examination, he has been unable to reduce to less than seventy-one conjugations.

And onomatopes exist not only in the languages of the Aryan family, but even in the tongues of peoples belonging to a lower stage of society.

The present paper is one of the results of original investigation among tribes of the Siouan family from 1871 to 1873, and from 1878 to the present time.

As far as practicable, the Dhegiha examples given in this article have been collated with their equivalents in six other Siouan

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\* 284 pages. London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1874.

languages, namely, Kwapa, Kansa, Osage, J̄oiwere, Winnebago, and Dakota.

But when the language to which an example belongs is not named, the root or word referred to is in the Dhegiha, the language of the Ponka and Omaha tribes.

There are sundry permutations of sound discoverable in the Siouan languages, among which permutations are *sh* and *kh*, *gh* and *z*, *dh* and *n*. The words in which these permutations occur are not always synonyms; but when we find a word in which *sh*, for example, is used, we may infer that the language contains another word differing from the former only in the substitution of *kh* for *sh*, or that one language or dialect uses *sh* where the other employs its correlative, *kh*.

Most of the onomatopoes recorded by the writer are dissyllabic; a few are polysyllabic. The monosyllabic ones which have been gained can soon be enumerated. Hu, *to bark as a dog or wolf*, is explained by the Omaha description of the barking sound, "Hu-hu-hu!" K<u+ describes the report of a gun. Xu is the root in ga-xu', *to beat a drum*. S'u resembles the sound heard in planing ("S! s! s!"), whence are formed ba-s'u', *to plane*, and dhi-s'u', *to use a drawing-knife*.

TABLE I.

Onomatopoes in dha <sup>n</sup> .	Do. in dhu.	Do. in 'e.
ɬa'-dha <sup>n</sup> kha'-dha <sup>n</sup>	sa-dhu' sha-dhu'	su'-'e khu'-'e za-'e'
Do. in khi.	Do. in shi.	Do. in si.
ɬa'-khi t'u'-khi	k'u'-shi ɬa'-shi ɬu'-shi	ɬa'-si
Do. in ma <sup>n</sup> .	Do. in ɬi.	Do. in pi.
ɬa'-ma <sup>n</sup> ɬa'-ma <sup>n</sup>	pu'-ɬi shta'-ɬi tcha'-ɬi	ɬu'-pi shka'-pi ska'-pi sa'-pi

The dissyllabic onomatopes can be arranged in classes.

1. Those ending in "dha<sup>a</sup>." ʔa'dha<sup>a</sup> denotes the sound made in pushing against, or pulling from, a door, plank, or hard buffalo hide (Derivatives: ba-ʔa'dha<sup>a</sup>, to make the sound by pushing; dhi-ʔa'dha<sup>a</sup>, by pulling, etc.). Kha'dha<sup>a</sup> describes the sound made in brushing against or pulling through sun-flowers, grass, or leaves (Derivatives: ba-kha'dha<sup>a</sup>, denoting action by pushing; dhi-kha'dha<sup>a</sup>, by pulling; ga-kha'dha<sup>a</sup>, by hitting, etc., etc.).

2. Onomatopes ending in "dhu." The corresponding Kansa ending is yu. Sha-dhu' (Kansa, sha-yu'; ʔoiwere, sha'-kh'e) conveys two ideas, the first being a swishing sound, made in water; the second being the sound made by the hitting, dragging, etc., of a chain. Sa-dhu' (Kansa, sa-yu; ʔoiwere, tha'-kh'e) is used in speaking of the rattling of corn in a granary or on a pile out of doors, as well as of the rattling of the wés'a sa-dhu or rattlesnake. The Kansa has a third root, kha'-yu; but kha'-dhu, which would be its Dhegiha equivalent, has not yet been found.

3. Onomatopes ending in "e." Khu'-e (Kansa and Osage, khu'-we; ʔoiwere, kho'-kh'e), the sound of which is given as "kh+", describes the sound made in tearing calico, the roar of falling water (whence, ni khu'e, *a waterfall*), the sound heard in sawing or in scraping wood by pushing, as well as the whizzing of a whirled stick. Su'-e is applied to two sounds: (1.) "S+", the sound of ice breaking up and floating off, or that of a steady rain; (2.) "Sk! sk! sk!" the swishing sound made in walking through grass. Za'-e means "a noise, buzz, confusion," and is applied to the sound of millstones in motion.

4. Onomatopes ending in "shi," "khi," and "si." K'u-shi, according to one Omaha, George Miller, denotes a gulping sound, and occurs in dha-k'u-shi khti na-zhi', which is said of the noise made in drinking water, whether by a horse or a person. Another Omaha used k'ushi itself as a verb to describe the flapping of ducks' wings in water when they alight to drink; but this has been denied by a third Omaha, Wa-dje-pa. ʔa'-shi seems to be used in two ways: ba-ʔa'shi means to make the sound heard when one taps on a table with the end of a pencil; but ga-ʔa'shi, to make the sound (tsh+) heard when one strikes a tree with an ax when the sap is flowing. ʔa'-khi is formed from the sound, "tkh+"; hence, ga-ʔa'-khi, to make the sound heard when a tree is struck with an ax in cold weather. Dhi-ʔa'khi éga<sup>a</sup> describes a sound of thunder,

“t'kh-t'kh-hyu+!” Ba-ja'khi is used of the sound heard when one pushes suddenly against a bone. Na<sup>a</sup>ja'khi as well as na<sup>a</sup>da'ghe refer to the sound of a horse's feet on hard, but not frozen, ground. Ju-shi' describes the crackling of twigs, the report of a gun, etc. Ba-ju'shi, to fire a popgun—*i. e.*, by pushing. Dhi-ju'shi, to snap the fingers, to fire a gun once—*i. e.*, by pulling the trigger. Ju-tu'shi (in Juwere, to-to'-khe, which approximates the sound “tkh-tkh-tkh!”) has a synonym, tchi-tchi'-zhe, both denoting the frequent crackling or breaking of twigs and small branches, or the frequent discharges of fire-arms. Only one example of another root, ju'-khi, has been found, dhi-ju'khi, which marks a crackling sound made by pulling. Ju'-si refers to a snapping sound, made by the aid of a rope, cord, or stiff hide; as, dhi-ja'si éga<sup>a</sup>, to make such a sound by pulling a cord; ba-ja'si, to make a snapping sound by punching against a rope or stiff hide.

5. Onomatopes ending in “ma<sup>a</sup>.” Ja'-ma<sup>a</sup> and ja'-ma<sup>a</sup> refer to the ringing of a bell, etc. Hence dhi-ja'ma<sup>a</sup> and dhi-ja'ma<sup>a</sup>, to ring a bell by pulling a rope. Ga-ja'ma<sup>a</sup>, to strike, as a clock does. Other verbs in -ma<sup>a</sup> differ in meaning, as, ba-ma<sup>a</sup>, to use a file, sharpen a scythe by pushing; dhi-ma<sup>a</sup>, to sharpen an ax on a grindstone (the original reference in each case may have been to the sound made); but bi-ma<sup>a</sup>, to knead dough!

6. Onomatopes in -xi and -pi. Shta'-xi and shta-shta'-xi describe one or more flapping or slapping sounds, made in mud or some other soft object. Shka'-pi occurs in ga-shka'pi, to make the sound heard in slapping the cheek or the back of the hand; but ska'-pi, in ga-ska'pi, means to make the sound heard in clapping the palms of the hands together; also expressed by tcha'-xi, in the verb ga-tcha'xi. Sa'-pi describes such a cracking or smacking sound as is made by a whip-lash; whence gasa'pi, to use a whip, and we'gasa'pi, a whip. Sa'pi also occurs in gasa'pidha<sup>a</sup> ga'ghe (synonym, gapu'xi-dha<sup>a</sup> ga'ghe, from pu'xi), to make the sound heard when one lets a book fall to the floor or ground. Pu'xi is a popping sound, as heard in drawing a cork from a bottle, or a deadened sound, a sort of thud, as in hitting flesh, garments, or other soft objects. Ju'-pi (Juwere, to'pě), marks a pattering sound, as in na<sup>a</sup>ju'upi (Juwere, na<sup>a</sup>to'topě), with which compare its synonym, na<sup>a</sup>-ji'de (from na<sup>a</sup>-ji'de).

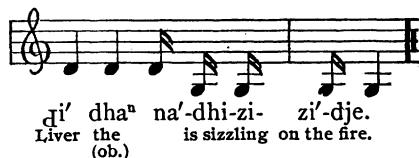
7. Onomatope in “shka” (compare shka-pi, given just above). Mu'-shka-shka, to gargle the throat. In this word “mu” denotes the motion of water, but generally it refers to some effect produced by shooting.

TABLE II.

In ghe.	In ze.	In zhe.	In de.
'a'-ghe k'a'-ghe k'e'-ghe		tchi'-zhe khdha'-zhe	ɰi'-de ju-de'
bdha <sup>n</sup> '-ghe du'-ghe	gi'-ze da'-ze	khdha <sup>n</sup> '-zhe du'-zhe	zu'-de zi'-de za'-de
da'-ghe		da'-zhe	

7. Roots in ghe, ze, zhe, and de seem to be related. We find in Dhegiha the roots da'ghe, da'ze, da'zhe, and za'de, though all do not convey ideas of sound. All verbs in dazhe except one, mudazhe, *to fillip with the fingers*, refer to chafing or blistering the hands or feet. Za'de usually conveys the idea of branching off or forking (with which may be compared the roots gha and za, the noun na<sup>n</sup>be' uga'za, *the phalanges*, etc., etc.); but, in one instance, it refers to sound hu' tẽ za'de i'nahi<sup>n</sup>, the voice is really indistinct—that is, the sound scatters instead of going straight to the person addressed. Compare with this the phrase hu' tẽ da'ghe, the voice is hoarse. Dhi-da'ghe refers to one of the sounds of thunder, “gh+,” whence we have the personal name, Wa-dhi'-da-ghe, Thunder being makes the sound “Gh+!” When a horse walks on hard but unfrozen ground, the sound can be described by na<sup>n</sup>-da'ghe as well as by na<sup>n</sup>-ɰa'khi. Da'ze is a cognate root. Dhi-da'ze refers to a sound of the thunder, “z+,” whence the personal name, Wa-dhi'-daze, Thunder being makes the sound “Z+!” Zu'de denotes a whistling sound, such as a man makes; whence zu-zu'-de wa-a'', to whistle a tune, as a man does; and ga-zu'-zu-de, to roar or whistle often, as the wind does. A woman's whistling is described by zi-zi'-de wa-a'', from the root zi'-de, denoting the hissing sound of confined air that is escaping. Na'-zide, to make a sizzling sound, as when meat is broiling, recalls a fragment of an Omaha story: A fawn that was grazing by his mother's side, detected the approach of some hunters, and warned his parent, but she refused to believe that she was in danger, and insisted that the fawn had seen some crows. The warning was given several times, till it was too late. The hunters shot at the mother and killed her, allowing the fawn to escape. By and by he crept

back and found that the men had cut up his mother, putting her liver on the fire. So he sang this lament :



“O mother, I said that they were men !

You said that they were crows ;

So now your liver is sizzling on the fire !”

Li'-de is said to refer to a hollow or drumming sound on the floor, the ground, or a door. It is difficult to distinguish it from xu'-ge, another drumming sound. Ju-de' refers to the expulsion of the breath by a person or animal that is nearly exhausted from running, etc. Khdha'-zhe means to scream or cry out, as a young animal does ; whence, dha-khdha'-khdha-zhe, to talk or sing in a quavering voice ; bi-khdha'-khdha-zhe, to make a flute give forth quavering notes, etc., etc. Khdha<sup>a</sup>'-zhe marks a crunching sound, occurring in ba-khdha<sup>a</sup>'zhe, to crush an egg-shell by pushing at it, and dhi-khdha<sup>a</sup>'zhe, to make the crunching sound heard when a sled is pulled over firm snow on a frosty morning. Compare the root bdha<sup>a</sup>'ghe, given hereafter. Tchi'-zhe and its derivative, tchitchi'zhe, refer, as has been stated, to the crackling of twigs and small branches. See xushi, which has been given above. The creaking of new shoes and the sound of fiddle-strings (“Gi-gi-gi”) suggest the root gi'-ze (in Dakota, ki<sup>a</sup>-za), which has several derivatives : ba-gi'ze, to play the fiddle (*i. e.*, make it creak by pushing the bow), dha-gi'ze, to gnash the teeth, and nan-gi'ze, to make (shoes) creak in walking. 'A'-ghe and its synonyms, k'a'-ghe and k'e'-ghe, are used to describe the sounds of filing, grating, gnawing, or scratching on metal, bone, hard wood, etc. The corresponding roots are k'e'-gha in Dakota, k'aghe in Kansa and Osage, and kh'e'ghe, kh'a'ghe and 'e'-ghe in Liwewere. Dha-k'a'ghe and dha-k'e'ghe mark the sound made by rats when gnawing. Na<sup>a</sup>-'a'ghe is

the sound made by a horse when walking on frozen ground. See daghe and ʔakhi above. Bdha<sup>n</sup>-ghe is a crunching sound, such as is heard when one eats a crust of bread or when a horse eats oats or corn, a dog gnaws a bone and crushes it, or as when one crushes through ice or snow. Yellow Buffalo, a Ponka man, made khdha<sup>n</sup>-zhe synonymous with bdha<sup>n</sup>-ghe. Du<sup>g</sup>-ghe has several derivatives: dha-du<sup>g</sup>-ghe means to make the sound heard when a hazelnut is cracked between the teeth; dhi-du<sup>g</sup>-ghe, to make the sound heard when a stick is broken in the hands. While the cognate root, du<sup>z</sup>-zhe, now relates to an *effect*, it may have referred originally to the *sound* made in producing that effect; thus, dhi-du<sup>z</sup>-zhe means, at present, to split or crack a board by boring, to crack an egg by handling. Other instances of the transfer of meaning can be found. Among them is the following: tchi<sup>z</sup>-zhe, as has been shown, is an onomatope—one of its derivatives, ba-tchi<sup>z</sup>-zhe, has two meanings—(1) to make a single cracking sound by pushing against a twig or small branch, which is broken by the act; (2) to push ahead, as through a thicket; whence, a<sup>z</sup>-ʔi-pa-tchi<sup>z</sup>-zhe, to persevere in a certain course of conduct, despite all obstacles, regardless of the consequences.

TABLE III.

Dhegiha.	Kwapa.	Kansa.	Osage.	ʔoiwere.	Winnebago.	Dakota.
sha-dhu/ sa-dhu/ su <sup>z</sup> -e khu <sup>z</sup> -e ʔu <sup>z</sup> shi bdha <sup>n</sup> -ghe ska <sup>z</sup> -pi 123 45	shad <sup>h</sup> a/ sad <sup>h</sup> a/ su <sup>z</sup> -wad <sup>h</sup> ʔ khu <sup>z</sup> -wad <sup>h</sup> ʔ tu <sup>z</sup> khi bna <sup>z</sup> -ghe	shay <sup>z</sup> / say <sup>z</sup> / su <sup>z</sup> -we khu <sup>z</sup> -we blū <sup>z</sup> -ghe	shadh <sup>z</sup> / su <sup>z</sup> -wē khu <sup>z</sup> -we	sha <sup>z</sup> /kh <sup>z</sup> ʔ tha <sup>z</sup> /kh <sup>z</sup> ʔ tho <sup>z</sup> /kh <sup>z</sup> ʔ kho <sup>z</sup> /kh <sup>z</sup> ʔ to <sup>z</sup> /kh <sup>z</sup> ʔ prū <sup>z</sup> -ghē thka <sup>z</sup> -pē	sa <sup>z</sup> -rākh sha <sup>z</sup> -rākh kōkh shōkh tsh <sup>z</sup> kh khu <sup>z</sup> -wu psak 4132	khda, khla      { mnu <sup>z</sup> -gha khbu

In Table III sa<sup>z</sup>-rākh appears as the Winnebago equivalent of the Dhegiha shadhu<sup>z</sup>, and sha<sup>z</sup>-rākh as that of sa-dhu<sup>z</sup>, being so given by a Winnebago. But future investigation may show that sha-rākh is the equivalent of sha-dhu, as sa-rākh is that of the sa-dhu. In the same table the Dakota mnugha corresponds to bdha<sup>n</sup>-ghe, bnaghe, blū<sup>z</sup>-ghe, and prū<sup>z</sup>-ghe; but the Winnebago khu<sup>z</sup>-wu is unlike them; it must be compared with another Dakota root, khbu. In the Winnebago, psak, as compared with skapi, we have a case of metathesis.

A crow is called *xa'-ghe* by the Dhegiha, *ka'-ghe* by the Kansa, Osage, and *Łoiwere* tribes; but the Kwapa call it *ma*. Kan-ghi in Dakota means "*raven*" rather than *crow*, although the Dakota name for the Absaroka or Crow Indians is Kan-ghi'wi-cha'-sha, Crow people. The whippoorwill is *ha'-ku-gdhě* in Dhegiha, *ha'ku-lě* in Kansa, *ha'-kūn-kdhě* in Osage, and *paku'wishka* in Dakota. The Ponka children give the cry of the whippoorwill as follows: "*Ha'-ku-kdhě! ha'-ku-kdhě! a-ja''*."

Three verbs, *to cough*, *to snore*, and *to sneeze*, point to the respective sounds made. *To cough* is *hu'-khpe*; *to snore*, *zha'-khdhu'-de* (the sound of snoring being expressed by *khdh+*), and *to sneeze* is *he'-tchi'* (Kwapa, *hě-shi'*). The writer knows of other Dhegiha onomatopes, but he must defer saying more on this subject until he can publish his Dhegiha dictionaries and grammar.

STONE CIRCLES IN NORTH DAKOTA.—We have received from Mr. George Plato Pierce, of Yorktown, Dickey county, North Dakota, a letter bearing on this subject, which was discussed in Vol. II, No. 2, of this journal. There is space only for a few extracts:

"At the summit of a gentle prairie swell near my house \* \* \* is a circle, about 7 feet in diameter, of bowlders placed about a foot apart. I have found many similar circles, often in groups, in the country hereabouts and in the coteaus to the northwest, in Logan county. The stones are not sunk into the earth, but the soil has accumulated about them, so that it is difficult to remove them without pick or shovel. I suppose these stones were so placed by the Indians to hold down the edges of their tents. \* \* \* A butcher-knife found near the circle first mentioned may have been lost by Indians when encamped there. [He describes the ordinary hunting knife of the old Indian trader.] \* \* \* Often I find a large stone in a depression (one or two rods across) made, I am told, by the buffaloes. Holding their noses on the stone they would bellow and paw; they would then further tear the soil with their horns and wallow in the dirt."

Mr. Pierce relates that a wild buffalo was killed near Oakes, on the James (Dakota) river, as late as last autumn. It is not generally known that the bison survived to such a late date so far east.